



Presentation

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Languages and Cultures in Translation Theories

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Presentation

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TTR is delighted to be able to present to its readers the works of the contributors to the FIT Committee for Translation Theory. We welcome this wide-ranging selection of writings dealing with the concerns of translation studies as exposed by some of the major scholars in the field.

Among these papers devoted to "Languages and Cultures in Translation Theories," it is possible to discern two main thematic orientations: those addressing linguistic and cultural — in the broader sense — issues by articulating both, and those focusing more specifically on the translation of artistic texts, such as theatre, poetry, and the novel.

Nevertheless, a common purpose and a general tone emanate from the whole; each of the authors presents an outline of current research in his or her chosen approach, thus opening the door to the theoretical perspectives that they think most fruitful in translation studies. No wonder most of these articles are largely *programmatic*.

The first four articles focus mainly on theories of translation in general, and on linguistic and cultural problems observed in the transfer from one language to another.

Eugene A. Nida delivers a broad survey of theories of translation. After recalling that, in his opinion, theorization of translation should be focused on the processes and the procedures involved in interlingual communication in order to understand the nature of translation, the author identifies four theoretical approaches which he considers complementary: the philological approach (from Cicero to Steiner, through Luther, Dolet and Pope), the linguistic

approach (with numerous representatives, who have benefitted from the contribution of important philosophers), the communicative approach (which E. A. Nida has illustrated himself), and the sociosemiotic approach (which takes into account the multiplicity of codes involved in any act of verbal communication). In the author's opinion, this latter perspective is the most promising today.

V.N. Komissarov draws a quick portrait of the sciences that have shaped translation theories, by insisting on linguistics and those of its branches to have developed during the second half of the 20th century: sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, contextual linguistics, text linguistics, pragmalinguistics, etc. In the author's view, linguistics is at the centre of the general theory of translation, which is supplemented by special translation theories, in particular that which is concerned with the process of translation. V.N. Komissarov also takes cultural factors into account (discussing Eugene A. Nida's ideas, in particular): he states that translation should not delete differences, for it plays an important role in providing openings onto new, foreign cultural horizons, which ought to be known and respected.

Monika Doherty proposes to focus on a theory of comparative stylistics, so as to raise the quality level of translations and to avoid subjectivism when one has to evaluate to what extent the translator may/must depart from the original. The author believes that such a theory depends largely on the reliability of observational data. The main translation criterion will be that of the "formal analogy" which is concerned with word classes, parts of speech, grammatical categories, etc. From these bases, M. Doherty examines a few cases of redundancy and explicitness in comparing the German and English languages. She concludes by saying that with such an analysis based on comparative stylistics, "we will develop a better understanding of the relation between the informational relevance of an element and the informational value associated with its linguistic form in a certain language."

Yo-In Song examines a number of cases of problematic cultural transfers from a Language of Limited Diffusion (LLD), namely Korean, to English (a Language of "Unlimited" Diffusion - LUD). The author states that in every communication there are necessarily losses and that any message is culture-sensitive; this is true *a fortiori* when one has to translate it. That being said, Yo-In Song identifies five ethnocultural dimensions of messages (which he calls the "ethnocultural pentad"): the cosmogonic-ecological, bio-physiological, psycho-physical, socio-institutional and techno-scientific

dimensions. He insists on the fact that, all things considered, in these areas transferability of semantic elements between the LLD that is Korean and the LUD that is English is not an insurmountable task.

The second group of four articles deals specifically with the translation of the artistic text, the latter being a part in the general framework of the "cultural text."

Mladen Jovanović concentrates on intentional systematic and systemic deviations, such as those observable in the works of James Joyce, e e cummings and William Faulkner, and in their translations into Serbo-Croatian (SC). To decipher deviations, the author proposes to follow precise steps, from consultation with the writer to the contrastive analysis of cultures. In his examination of deviations, M. Jovanović focuses particularly on the analysis of a passage from *Finnegans Wake* and on its translation into SC. In conclusion, he mentions the centrality of deviations in all linguistic activities and therefore in translation, as well as the analyzable and translatable nature of deviations, and lastly the role of theorization in the resolution of translation problems.

According to **Susan Bassnett**, the concept of "performability" must be brought into question as a criterion for the theatricality of a text. A historical survey of the positions of authors and performers towards the written playtext proves that this concept varies from culture to culture, from period to period and from text type to text type. This variable status of the written playtext has a considerable incidence on the task of the translator. For S. Bassnett, the main problem of the translator is to find solutions to questions that are primarily linguistic ones and not those related to performability. The author encourages the development of a historiographic study of theatre translation and "further investigation into the linguistic structuring of extant theatre texts, free from the shackles of the post-naturalist concept of the all-powerful, pre-performance written text that we call a play."

Dionýz Ďurišin envisages the translation of artistic texts in the framework of interliterary systems and he concentrates on three categories of the latter. The first, di-polyoecism, is observed in multilingualistic, multicultural environments, which provide the terrain for works that function in different literary systems as well, although not necessarily in the same modes. These are factors that translation must take into account. Examples are the Slavonic interliterary association and the mediating function of English among Irish, Welsh

and Scottish literatures. The second category is the style-genre dimension. The author defines genres as social configurations that differ from society to society. Consequently, translated texts are subject to the generic models of the target culture systems. Examples are the translations into Czech and English of "le Buvard de cendres" d'André Breton and the Slovak translations of Gogol's *Petrograd Novels*. Lastly, the author examines the case of a translation of translation, i.e. one done through a mediating language (generally a "podstrochnik," a word-for-word translation). This category of translation is all the more interesting to study since the mediating translation necessarily carries its socio-aesthetic values whether consciously or unconsciously.

For André Lefevere, translation is socio-historically determined, which means, among other things, that translation takes place within a hierarchy of languages and cultures (Greek, for instance, was considered as superior to Latin by the Romans themselves) and within the framework of the "pedagogical institution." The influence of a text is inscribed in a system of "packaging, cutting, and pasting of literature (...) for pedagogical purposes," and translation as part of the packaging business must be studied as such. Do translation studies need to be independent from other disciplines and in particular from comparative literature? "The very claim to independence risks robbing (the field) of much of its potential relevance, a relevance that goes beyond the boundaries of literary studies." According to A. Lefevere, rewriting activities (translations, literary histories, etc.) are the best mirrors in which to study cultures in interaction and the image that a given culture wishes to offer itself for pedagogical purposes. No longer can literature be considered to be "secular scripture;" it is now possible to study it as a non-sacred, symbolic object — fortunately for translation studies.

These are the eight contributions on "Languages and Cultures in Translation Theories." This issue of *TTR* would not be complete, however, without the regular critical chronicle of Translation, Terminology, Writing (and Interpretation) works published in recent years, nor without Geneviève Mareschal's article on Jean Darbelnet.

Geneviève Mareschal's article is devoted to the late Jean Darbelnet, his thinking and his action. J. Darbelnet was the scholar who, together with Jean-Paul Vinay, wrote the pioneering work entitled *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (1957). This famous study has been of considerable importance in the professionalization of translation pedagogy in Canada and elsewhere,

but other aspects of his activities are less well-known. G. Mareschal sketches a brief portrait of the man and the scholar who died in 1990, much lamented by the translation community.

This issue of **TTR** closes with in-depth review articles on three books dealing with the history of translation, the sociocritics of translation, and meaning and lexicography. The reader may find it interesting to continue his/her reflection on "Languages, Cultures in Translation Theories" with these contributions. I should like to address one last word to some of the contributors to this issue of **TTR**. Despite all our efforts, we have found it impossible to obtain biobibliographical notes for some of the authors. We hope that a subsequent contribution to *TTR* will offer the occasion to remedy these absences.

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